

Food Assistance and Hunger in the Heartland 2021

Summary of Key Findings – Rural Supplement for the Kansas Food Bank

July 2022

Background

Food Assistance and Hunger in the Heartland 2021: Summary of Key Findings - Rural Supplement for the Kansas Food Bank includes findings from research conducted in the summer of 2021 by the University of Missouri Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security. The research aimed to better understand the circumstances of food pantry clients served in rural counties of the Kansas Food Bank service area. It involved implementation of an online and telephone survey completed by food pantry clients.

This report has been prepared for the Kansas Food Bank and includes results obtained from rural food pantry clients across 43 counties of the food bank's 85-county service area. All clients included in this study received services at a food pantry affiliated with the food bank. The study only included food pantries (i.e., grocery programs that distribute food for off-site consumption) and did not collect data related to meal or congregate feeding programs or other types of food bank programs.

Client & Household Characteristics

- **Household composition**
 - 40 percent of all households have a least one adult over the age of 65.
 - 35 percent have at least one child under 18 years of age.
 - 13 percent have at least one child under six years of age.
 - 16 percent of households with children are headed by a single adult.

- **Client demographics**
 - 85 percent of client respondents identify as Caucasian/White.
 - 1 percent identify as African American/Black.
 - 9 percent identify as Hispanic/Latino/Latina/Latinx.
 - 76 percent of respondents identify as a woman.
 - 3 percent of respondents live in temporary housing or are houseless.
 - 87 percent have a high-school degree or higher level of education.

- **Veteran status**
 - 12 percent of households include someone who previously served in the U.S. Armed Forces, Reserves, or National Guard.

- **Employment and income**
 - 47 percent of households have at least one working adult.
 - 30 percent of all households have a member who is working full-time.
 - 52 percent of all households make \$15,000 or less per year.

- **Food pantry use**
 - 28 percent of households used a food pantry more than once a month in the summer of 2021.
 - 33 percent of households used a pantry every month during the past year.
 - 45 percent reported using a food pantry for more than two years.
 - 40 percent of households get at least half of the food they consume in a typical month from a food pantry.

- **Food security**
 - 69 percent of households experience food insecurity.
 - 32 percent experience very low food security (indicated by disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake).
 - 36 percent experience low food security (indicated by reduced quality, variety, and desirability of diet).
 - 31 percent experience marginal food security (indicated by anxiety over food sufficiency).

- **SNAP eligibility and use**
 - 75 percent of households have incomes making them eligible for SNAP.
 - Only 33 percent of client households have used SNAP in the previous year.

- **Use of child nutrition assistance programs**
 - 33 percent of households with children five and under used WIC in the previous year.
 - 71 percent of households with children under 18 participate in free or reduced-price breakfast or lunch.

- **Health**
 - 41 percent of all households have a member with diabetes or pre-diabetes.
 - 60 percent have a member with high blood pressure.
 - 45 percent have a member with high cholesterol.
 - 32 percent have a member without health insurance of any kind.

- **Trade-offs**
 - 34 percent of households had to choose between paying for food and *medicine/medical care* in the past 12 months.
 - 42 percent had to choose between paying for food and *utilities*.
 - 28 percent had to choose between paying for food and *housing*.
 - 33 percent had to choose between paying for food and *transportation*.
 - 7 percent had to choose between paying for food and *education expenses*.
 - 10 percent of those with children under 18 had to choose between paying for food and *childcare*.

- **Coping strategies**
 - 67 percent of households purchased the least expensive food in the past 12 months, even if it wasn't the healthiest option.
 - 40 percent purchased food in dented or damaged packages.
 - 38 percent consumed food past its expiration date.
 - 20 percent sold or pawned personal items.
 - 8 percent watered down food or drinks.

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